

THE CRISIS IN ENGLAND.

WHEN the leader of the Opposition had declined to move an Amendment to the Address, the natural inference was that the Government was not to be immediately overthrown. Appearances, however, were deceptive, and the Government has been turned out on the ground, in form at least somewhat whimsical, that Mr. Jesse Collings's crotchet about allotments had not been mentioned in the Queen's Speech. The end of the Salisbury Administration was not glorious. It surely would have been the wiser, as well as the braver, policy to put the great question of the day in the front, tender a distinct issue upon it, and thus force Mr. Gladstone, if he meant to give battle, to disclose his own intentions, which it would have been most inconvenient to him to do. But Lord Salisbury, though able, as his management of foreign affairs during these months has shown, and powerful in debate, is not supposed to be made of iron. No doubt it also weighed upon his mind that he had himself obtained office through an intrigue with the Parnellites, and that in announcing a renewal of the Crimes Act, which became inevitable after the total failure of Lord Carnarvon's attempt to govern by the common law, he would be exposing himself to reflections not only upon his consistency but upon his character. Bitterly he must repent his weakness in having listened to the counsels, as silly as they were unprincipled, of Lord Randolph Churchill. The fruits of a breach of honour have been a brief tenure of office without power, a deep stain upon the character of the party, and a fatal weakening of its moral position for the struggle with the Radicals and Disunionists headed by Mr. Gladstone which apparently is now about to open. It will be fortunate for Conservatism and Unionism if the leadership should be thrown more into the hands of men like Lord Hartington and Mr. Goschen, who have soiled themselves with no intrigues, and have steadily kept the path of honour.

It may be predicted that the new Government will be essentially Radical, though garnished with some of Mr. Gladstone's old Liberal colleagues, who will be drawn either by personal attachment to their chief, a motive which is likely to operate strongly with Lord Spencer, or by the wish to return to office, which in some cases is understood to be keen. What support it will have upon the issue on which it is really formed cannot yet be determined, as a division on a resolution in favour of Land Reform is an imperfect clue to the sentiments of members on the question of the Union. Probably there will be an Opposition strong enough in conjunction with the Lords to enforce an appeal to the country before a measure of Disunion can become law. If Mr. Gladstone and the Radicals see this, it is very likely that for the present their Irish policy will take an agrarian rather than a political line. But they will scarcely be able as responsible rulers to evade the necessity of restoring something like order and security for life and property in Ireland, where not only is outrage, in the unspeakably barbarous form unhappily familiar to the people, being renewed, but law has been supplanted by lawless terrorism, and the popular mind, saturated with conspiracy and rapine, is in danger of becoming a political soil on which no institutions of any kind, except a government of force, can be built. Yet it is hard to see how measures of repression can be introduced without forfeiting the patronage of Mr. Parnell. A Radical Ministry will perhaps try to purchase quiet by more sweeping measures of agrarian spoliation, or by a lavish use of Imperial funds drawn from the earnings of the thrifty and law-abiding classes of England and Scotland for the propitiation of rebellion. To the postponement of Home Rule Mr. Parnell is not unlikely to assent in face of the strong manifestation of Unionist feeling in Great Britain.

After all, the decision of the question whether England shall keep her Union and her greatness with it, or submit to dismemberment and descend to the second rank among nations, must depend upon the temper of her people; and with regard to the temper of the British people at the present time, it cannot be denied that there is too much ground for misgiving. Much has been said about the sordid aims of a nation of shopkeepers. But it is not in that direction that the danger lies. Nations of shopkeepers have not only produced the highest civilization and the most glorious art, but when patriotism has given the word, they have stood fire very well. The tendencies which there is reason to fear are those of a nation of pleasure-seekers, willing to give up Ireland or anything else provided their pleasures are not interrupted, and those of a nation of trade unionists thinking more of their trade union than of their country. Yet if the artisan only knew it, when the flag goes down in dishonour, commerce too will strike her sail. Energy and virtue there still are in abundance among the British people, but nations, like men, have their hours of weakness.

In the meantime Nationalist journals, or journals in quest of the

Nationalist vote, are printing the black list of what are styled Coercion Acts, and arguing from their number and frequent renewal of the Acts that there must have been systematic tyranny on the part of the British Government. The true inference is the very reverse. No candid Irishman will deny that his compatriots, in the present stage of their political education, are less law-abiding than the Anglo-Saxons and require a more stringent enforcement of the law. Mr. Godkin, whose Irishry is above question, not only admits this, but dwells upon it as a reason for allowing the Irish to have separate institutions. He characterizes Irishmen as having much less tenderness to individual rights than Englishmen and as being really much less shocked by the exercise of arbitrary power. He notes, with justice, that in all European struggles they have been not on the Liberal but on the Absolutist side and friends of the Kaiser and the Pope, as in America they have been friends of the Slave-owner. "A bold man," he says, "is not needed to predict that whenever we see self-government in Ireland we shall see the law, whatever it be, enforced with an indifference to personal freedom and convenience which will surprise Englishmen who are now most shocked and alarmed by Irish license." An enforcement of law with startling indifference to personal freedom and convenience seems rather a Hibernian notion of "self-government." But Mr. Godkin is perfectly right in his description of Irish tendencies, and the series of Coercion Acts is merely the practical recognition of the fact. Their number and frequent renewal only show that Parliament has been always trying to dispense with them and has shrunk from prolonging the semblance of arbitrary rule for one unnecessary hour. Any other European Government would simply have proclaimed martial law and kept it in force till resistance had been thoroughly put down. Nor would this have called forth any indignant comments. It is the sensitive constitutionalism of Great Britain that both weakens her arm in suppressing disaffection and exposes her to exceptional criticism and scandal. The Crimes Act coerced no human being nor did it deprive any law-abiding citizen of a particle of his liberty or rights. It simply prevented Irishmen from assassinating, mutilating, and despoiling each other. Is it the duty of a civilized Government to give its people free murder?

Nothing, again, can be more unjust than to assume that because we are opposed to the dismemberment of the United Kingdom and to handing over the loyal Protestants of Ulster, as well as the rest of the Irish people, to the dominion of dynamiters or priests, that we must be opposed to any rational measure of Home Rule. I have myself constantly advocated the creation of a Council for each of the four Provinces, and the assignment to it of all matters which can fairly be called local, including even education, though I know too well what, in the Roman Catholic Provinces, the fate of education at first would be. Such an arrangement would be adapted to the real circumstances of the case, and would allow Ulster to take its own course and the other Provinces to take theirs. But Home Rule in this sense, or in any sense compatible with the Union, is not what Mr. Parnell and his associates want. What they want is Separation, and the destruction, if they can compass it, of the British Empire.

GOLDWIN SMITH.

THE EXAMINER.

IN spite of every form of despotism—Monarchical, Imperial, and Republican—in France, two forms of opposition have maintained themselves in a state of comparative freedom; one is the criticism of the *salon*, the other is the conspiracy of the other governmental alternative. Under all governments, Wit has been fairly free, and always very dangerous; under the Monarchy the Republicans have caballed, and under the Republic the dynasties have openly conspired. In no other country in the world has such a state of things existed; in no other, perhaps, could it exist. If the reader wishes to find his way into one of the most delightful corners of French history, he, or she, must seek the corner in which the books concerning the *salons* and their fair Empresses are stored. From the days of Madame de Rambouillet to those of Madame Mohl, the talk of the *salon* was part of the public opinion with which statesmen and monarchs had to deal. The Napoleonic dynasty feared it much, and suffered much from it. Napoleon I., after one of his battles, asked: "What do they say on the Faubourg St. Germain?" Napoleon III. was, half bitterly, forced to confess that Madame Mohl's *salon* was closed to him. The volume which Miss Kathleen O'Mara has just published concerning the life and career of Madame Mohl in Paris is a very readable one. It is open to the objection of being too descriptive and too little anecdotal; but it is very singular that none of the great queens of the *salons* has had a female or any Boswell, and that all the talk, much of the brilliancy of which no doubt consisted in manner, has vanished, like the orations of statesmen before the art of reporting was invented.